



# PRESS RELEASE

## Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation *Chief Richard Weber*

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IRS – Criminal Investigation

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### **Georgia Man Sentenced to Prison for Operating an Unlicensed Money Transmitting Business**

A Columbus, Georgia resident was sentenced to serve 21 months in prison, followed by three years of supervised release and ordered to forfeit \$1,357,476.18 for operating an unlicensed money transmitting business, Acting Assistant Attorney General Caroline D. Ciralo of the Justice Department's Tax Division and Acting U.S. Attorney G.F. "Pete" Peterman III for the Middle District of Georgia announced today.

According to court documents, between February 2013 and March 2014, Sawan Shah aka Sunny, owned, operated and managed several money transmitting companies in the Columbus area. Shah offered check cashing services to the public, including cashing of checks that exceeded \$1,000. Shah knew that he and his companies were required to be registered with Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) and with the State of Georgia. Neither Shah nor any of the businesses he controlled were registered with FinCEN or the State of Georgia as a money transmitting business or as a check cashier.

As part of his plea, the defendant admitted that several individuals approached him about cashing tax refund checks that were issued in the names of other individuals. Shah agreed to do so and did not require proof of identification for the individuals listed on the checks. Shah charged fees of between 10 and 30 percent of the value of the check, due to his knowledge that the checks were involved in tax fraud. In 2013 and 2014, Shah cashed approximately 567 federal tax refund checks that totaled \$1,357,476.18. Shah admitted in plea documents that those checks were the result of fraudulent claims for income tax refunds submitted in the names of stolen identities.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Ciralo and Acting U.S. Attorney Peterman III commended special agents of Internal Revenue Service (IRS)-Criminal Investigation and the U.S. Secret Service, who investigated the case and Trial Attorney Michael C. Boteler of the Tax Division and Assistant U.S. Attorney Crawford L. Seals of the Middle District of Georgia, who prosecuted the case.

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